Mrs. Kennedy Drops Suit In Accord With Magazine

Attorneys Fail to OK Statement

By ANDREW J. GLASS
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NEW YORK, Dec. 21.—Look Magazine and the Kennedy family late Wednesday night reached an agreement on William Manchester's book, "The Death of a President."

Attorneys for both sides struggled for more than seven hours to draft a face-saving compromise announcement amid the kind of bitterness and confusion that have marked the entire battle over the book.

WIDOW DROPS SUIT

In the end, they were unable to do so.

So William Attwood, editor-in-chief of Cowles Publications, Inc., read a short statement announcing that Mrs. John F. Kennedy had withdrawn her suit to block serialization of Manchester's account of her husband's assassination.

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Then Simon H. Rifkind, Mrs. Kennedy's attorney, read another statement saying that the action was taken because "every passage of a personal nature under contention for several months was either deleted by look or changed to her satisfaction."

The Kennedy family must still reach an accord with Harper & Row, which intends to publish the controversial book April 7.

1600 WORDS AFFECTED

Attwood, speaking into a battery of microphones at Rifkind's Madison ave. law offices, said the changes in text amounted to 1600 words out of the 80,000-word version that Look will publish in four parts beginning Jan. 10.

Speaking for Gardner Cowles, the publishing firm's editorial chairman, Attwood stressed that Mrs. Kennedy and her brother-in-law, Sen. Robert F. Kennedy (D., N. Y.), "in no way approved or indorsed" what Manchester had written.

He said that deletions did not affect the historical accuracy of the book and were restricted to only those passages that Mrs. Kennedy objected to "on personal grounds."

QUOTES MRS. KENNEDY

Rifkind agreed that the modifications and deletions still kept the historical account intact. But he quoted Mrs. Kennedy as saying:

"I have been told there are historical inaccuracies and unfair references in this book.

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That they have been written is unfortunate.

"However, it was clear before bringing this suit that historical judgment, even if inaccurate, could not properly be suppressed by a court of law. In time, history will deal fairly and justly with this period."

JOHNSON'S ROLE CITED

It was believed that the former President's widow was alluding to Manchester's references to the way that President Johnson assumed power in the hours and days that followed the assassination.

Material deleted from the Look account stemmed entirely from Manchester's 10 hours of taped interviews with Mrs. Kennedy. Under the accord, none of his other interviews or conclusions was altered.

Despite the settlement, the prospect remained that Manchester would bring a separate legal action, presumably against Mrs. Kennedy, on the basis of her previous allegations that he had produced "a tasteless and distorted" account of her husband's assassination and had violated her confidences in doing so.

AUTHOR RETAINS LAWYER

It was learned that Manchester last week retained Carleton G. Eldridge, Jr., a New York attorney, to represent his interests in the literary and legal dispute.

A spokesman for Koudert Brothers, the law firm with which Eldridge is associated, declined to comment on any aspects of the case.

It was known that Manchester was in New York and keeping informed of the negotiations over the 80,000-word account due to appear in Look in four parts beginning with the issue that goes on sale Jan. 10.

KENNEDY VICTORY?

Before the conflicting announcements were made, there were widely varying reports of just what was being deleted from the manuscript.

A source close to Mrs. Kennedy said, "When you ask for 10 changes and get 10 changes, I regard that as a victory."

However, a source close to Cowles Communications, Inc., publishers of Look, said: "We just took out a little fat. All the bones are still in there."

'SEVERAL HUNDRED WORDS'

The Cowles source said the deletions agreed upon in order to have Mrs. Kennedy approve publication amounted to "several hundred words—all of them gingerbread.

"They all related," the source continued, "to Mrs. Kennedy's personal vanity. None of the changes in any way altered the historical record of the President's assassination."

Last August, Look paid Manchester a record $665,000 for the U. S. magazine serial rights to his account.

Mrs. Kennedy selected Man-

chester to write the assassination story under a 1964 agreement that gave her and Robert Kennedy the right to review and approve the manuscript before publication.

This accord served as the basis for Mrs. Kennedy's breach-of-contract suit in the New York State Supreme Court—a suit in which Sen. Kennedy was not a party.

LIVES ON SAVINGS

It was learned that Manchester has kept in escrow the $365,000 already turned over by Look under a delayed-payment formula. He has lived for the last three years on his savings, as well as a $40,000 advance paid to him by the book's hard-cover publishers, Harper & Row.

Harper's has not been directly involved in the dealings that led to deletions in the Look text—changes that the widow insisted upon to protect her privacy. But it was understood that the publishing house was willing to incorporate those changes when it brings out the book next April 7.

Although the bulk of the material that proved offensive to Mrs. Kennedy would have appeared in the Look serialization, informants said that Harper's and the Kennedy family would still have to study the rest of the book to determine whether any further changes must be made in the full text to win Mrs. Kennedy's approval.